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Reconciling the Exotic "Other" in Nikolai Gogol's *Taras Bulba*

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Reconciling the Exotic "Other" in Nikolai Gogol's *Taras Bulba*

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Dedication

To my Ukrainian forefathers who made Cossack hats.

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Abstract

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Around the mid-sixteenth century, the Ukrainian Cossacks arose out of the desire to create free and equal communities outside the control of the imperial powers of Russia and Poland. In the nineteenth century, the Cossack was brought to the forefront of cultural myth making in the search for identity during the historical periods of Nationalism and Romanticism. The Zaporozhian Cossacks were central in the conceptualization of the modern Ukrainian identity and development of national consciousness because they represent independence, fighting suppression, and the simple values of honor and love of nature. While Russian national identity relies on the direct lineage from Kyivan Rus' and on the idea of a Slavic brotherhood to justify their imperial actions, Ukrainian national identity is based on the distinct origins of Russians and Ukrainians. Nikolai Gogol's nineteenth century story, *Taras Bulba*, depicts the Cossacks through the medium of historical epic and addresses the anxiety with foreigners and identity. The theoretical framework of "Orientalism" sheds light on the relationships between the Cossacks and their neighboring nations of Russia, Poland, and Turkey and

their liminal existence. The Cossacks of *Taras Bulba* exhibit contradictory thoughts and values that somehow coexist; the identities of exotic Cossack and nationalist Russian are reconciled. The representations of foreigners ("others") and women as well as the exotic eye are indicators of the tension in the Ukrainian Cossacks' imperial relationships. The twenty-first century films produced by Ukraine and Russia, demonstrate how both Ukrainian and Russian cultural myths can be extracted from the same text. Gogol showed how the Cossacks reconciled the exotic "other" in *Taras Bulba*, establishing identity based on contradictions in the geographical space of the borderlands.

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INTRODUCTION

Many scholars address the complicated relationship between Ukraine and Russia, each attempting to take a closer look at historical events, study archival records and texts, and find and analyze new details. One might argue that this topic has been completely exhausted, but in light of recent events and the political upheaval in Ukraine, this topic has become extremely relevant to our current global politics. Knowledge of the past teaches us how the world and the different nations within it work; in short, history informs the present. By re-examining the historical relationships between Russia and Ukraine, we see how conflicting ideas of historical events and figures have led to misunderstandings in modern times.

Russian and Ukrainian historians have different interpretations of their common Kyivan background. Most, if not all, Russian history books begin with Kyivan Rus' and, as a result, modern Ukrainian culture is understood to be a subset of Russian culture. The succession from Kyivan Rus' to Muscovy to the Soviet Union and Russia is important for the Russian nationalist idea, therefore control of Ukraine is vital for legitimizing the Russian state (Prizel 15). Russian historians represent the Eastern Slavs, i.e., Russians, Byelorussians, and Ukrainians, as one combined nation, reflecting the prevalent role of Russian colonial imperialism (Wynar 5). Ukrainian historians and scholars instead suggest that there is a continuation from Kyivan Rus' to the Halych-Volhynian kingdom in the thirteenth century and to the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth in the fourteenth to sixteenth century but some would argue that there is no direct lineage linking modern

Ukraine with Kyivan Rus' (Wynar 13). Ukrainian historians also argue that Russian and Ukrainian histories are separate and should not be conflated.

Russia's historical narrative is based on an imperial model, uniting multiple ethnic groups within a nation while Ukraine's history focuses on regional and cultural aspects that they see as unique and not under the umbrella of the Russian historical and cultural narrative. Ukraine's history is largely defined by outside influence and incorporation of foreign cultural practices. According to Russian historian Paul Bushkovitch, "by 1200 Kiev Rus was a single state in name only; the ruler of Kiev itself was either an outsider or a minor princeling" (13). The "Varangian Debate" in the eighteenth century, deals with the motivation for the Vikings to come to Kyivan Rus' through the opinions of the Normanists and the anti-Normanists[1]. The Normanists argue that the Varangians were Scandinavians who conquered the Slavs and gave them the name of Rus. Other scholars took this argument further to say that the Varangians "civilized" the Slavs.[2] The anti-Normanists argued that the Varangians were of Slavic descent and invited to Novgorod by the local Slavs. The "Varangian Debate" addresses with the purity of the Slavic ancestry, an important issue in Russian historiography. This debate highlights the use of historical narratives in the creation of cultural myths.

Ukraine's geographical position in relation to Russia colored Russians' perceptions of Ukrainians in that they were viewed as lesser, smaller, more provincial, and less socially advanced. As Russia became a strong imperial power, Ukraine fell into

[1] For a complete review of the Varangian debate and other historical conflicts in Russian and Ukrainian historiographies see Serhii Plokhy's *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past*.

[2] For example, German national and Russian historian August Ludwig von Schlözer

the role of the younger Slavic brother. The Cossack populations were Ukraine's attempt to create a distinct society which would be out of Russia's power and control. There are two types of Ukrainian identity stereotypes: the simple-minded rural peasant and the cunning (*khitryj*) bandit. The process of delineating only extreme characteristics of the "other" is a common method of asserting superiority by decreasing the potential for imperfection and variation of a human being. While stereotypes frequently have some basis in reality, they can in no way accommodate the spectrum of any nation. The value of examining the Cossacks in terms of modern events is clear; even in its national anthem, Ukraine proudly remembers the Cossacks' glory and the values of brotherhood, independence, and free will.

One main tenet of Ukraine's identity is their stronger historical relationship with Europe than with Russia. The presence of Germans, Austrians, and Poles in western Ukraine contributed to a stronger European cultural feeling and mindset. Western Ukraine belonged to Poland for many years and was only incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939. On the other hand, the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine had been part of the Russian empire for a longer period of time and did not experience the development of a European national consciousness.

With the rise of literary Romanticism in Europe in the early nineteenth century, Ukrainians began to express the need to create their own national identity, with a large part of the nationalism movement being the desire to separate from Russian identity and create their own Ukrainian identity. At this time Ukrainians were called *Malorosy*, or Little Russians. While this term came from the Byzantine style of naming smaller regions next to large powers, it lost its original meaning and took on condescending connotations.

At first, Russia encouraged "Little Russian patriotism," but then became concerned that the nationalism movement would incite Ukraine to demand independence. As a result, publications in Ukrainian were banned in 1863 and 1876. Up until this point, "the czarist administration had never treated Ukrainians as a minority and did not discriminate against Ukrainian culture and language" until there was a threat of separation (Molchanov 174). That is, since Russians and Ukrainians were basically the same, there was no need to discriminate. Additionally, the Ukrainian language was viewed as dialect of Russian, not a separate language. Ukrainians were viewed as peasant folk and therefore did not present a viable threat.

In the early nineteenth century, the Ukrainian revival began among the intelligentsia and focused on the Ukrainian peasants as a source of genuine identity which initiated a flurry of scholarship in the areas of language, folklore, and history. In terms of historiography, Ukrainian nationalists argued for their distinct origins in Kyivan Rus' which differed from the Great Russian's origins in Muscovy to the north. The Cossacks represented an ideal system of government and freedom from a suppressor, an image which aided the nationalistic movement towards independence. The Cossacks were seen through a Romantic lens for their traditional values rather than their brutal violence and xenophobia.

One of Ukraine's (and Russia's) most important authors, Nikolai Gogol, wrote during the Romantic and Nationalistic periods. Although Gogol was born in Ukraine, he moved to St. Petersburg as a young man and wrote in Russian. In society, Gogol managed a dual identity and his literature had great success. His historic epic, *Taras Bulba*, tells a story of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, particularly the relationship between a

Cossack and his sons, one of whom betrays the Cossack community and fights with the Poles. The story addresses themes of gender roles, nationality (both linguistically and through traditional values), the power of eyes and looking, and dichotomy of East versus West. In the twenty-first century, Russia and Ukraine each produced a film version of *Taras Bulba* which shows the extent of the diverging cultural mythologies of the Cossacks.

Given the imperial relationship between Russia and Ukraine, the themes in *Taras Bulba* align with issues commonly addressed in Edward Saïd's studies in Orientalism. Orientalist attitudes are used to differentiate between the identities of Cossack, Polish, and Asian. Although the Zaporozhian Cossacks were Ukrainian, the identities of Russian and Cossack are conflated at times in the text. The characters in the story gain power over others through their eyes and powerful glances. While initially the East versus West dichotomy is apparent, the identities of the characters become more fluid in terms of their relationships with "others."

Although there is no clear distinguishing line between Russian and Ukrainian language, culture, ethnicity, or history, the Orientalist gaze has created two separate identities. The gaze can go both ways, with Russians exoticizing the "other" and Ukrainians self-exoticizing. While Gogol himself did not distinguish the borderline, *Taras Bulba* shows how the Ukrainian Cossacks distinguished between themselves and foreigners particularly through contradictory expression of both barbarism and civilized customs, in the portrayal of gender (particularly the seductress), and the power that eyes and gazing have in the process of identifying and separating. Gogol's novel expresses a vital aspect of Russian and Ukrainian history, since the duality of the Orientalist gaze has

evolved into differentiating cultural narratives. These diverging perspectives appear in the film versions of *Taras Bulba* from 2009. Crucially, the effect of these contradicting narratives is apparent in the contemporary conflict between these nations and the lingering attitude of imperialism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the theoretical framework and methodology, Edward Saïd's seminal studies *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) serves as the basis of analysis. While his cultural analysis primarily pertains to Western Europe and its colonies, the introduction provides a comprehensive definition of Orientalism and its functions. The concept of Orientalism has been taken up by scholars of Russia as well. Susan Layton's extensive studies of the portrayal of the Caucasus and its people in literature, primarily the works of Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, and Leo Tolstoy shed light on the imperial narrative in Russia in the nineteenth century. She examines the role of the "noble savage" and the exotic natives in the creation of imperial discourse. Nathaniel Knight's article "Grigor'ev in Orenburg, 1851-1862: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?" was published in 2000 and specifically incorporated Saïd's methodology. Knight comments on Russia geographical space between Europe and Asia, suggesting a triptych, rather than the over simplistic polarity of East versus West. Knight addresses Russia's unique imperial position as literally being surrounded by "others." Later that year, Adeeb Khalid published a critical response to Knight's article addressing the proposed triptych. He suggests that instead of examining the "other," we should instead focus scholarship on our own identity without deriving it negatively. In 2015, Melica

Bakić-Hayden published her article "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of the Former Yugoslavia" which expanded on Saïd's work and post-colonial studies. Instead of placing nations on the dichotomy of East/South versus West/North, Bakić-Hayden suggests an orientalistic continuum where each nation see an exotic native in one direction and the imperial power in the opposite direction. Miroslav Shkandrij's book *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and The Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (2001), continues on the path of Russian Orientalism, turning the focus towards Ukraine. Shkandrij describes the contradictory relationship of Ukraine with Russia, as Ukraine was portrayed both as the fully assimilated Slavic brother nation as well as the exotic and romanticized "other." Additionally, Shkandrij's book shows Ukraine's "otherness" helped the surrounding imperial powers to establish their identities.

Serhii Plokhy is one of the leading scholars on Ukrainian history, national identity, and relationship with Russia. His book *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the Past* (2008) addresses the historiographic contradictions in the Russian and Ukrainian narratives. Additionally, his in depth study of the historian Mikhail Hrushevsky, *Unmaking Imperial Russia: Mikhailo Hrushevsky and the writing of Ukrainian History* (2005), sheds light on the Ukrainian historiography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Paul Bushkovitch's *A Concise History of Russia* (2012) provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of Russian history, notably its origins in the Kyivan Rus' principality. Mikhail Molchanov's book, *Political Culture and National Identity in Russian-Ukrainian Relations* (2002), provides a more contemporary approach to the problem of national identity in Ukraine.

One of the primary biographers and scholars of Gogol is Victor Erlich. While he acknowledges the difficulty of placing Gogol into one category, he sees Gogol as a prime example of the literary grotesque. His book, simply titled *Gogol* (1969), comprehensively addresses both biographical and literary topics while also presenting the views of other critics, notably Vladimir Nabokov and Andrey Bely. Donald Fanger contributed excellent scholarly work to the study of Gogol, noting the formal structures and stylistic themes. His earlier work places Gogol in the genre of Romantic Realism and in his book, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (1979), Fanger elucidates the functions of Gogol's texts and the different functioning tropes within the universe. Simon Karlinsky's seminal book, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* (1976), was the first to address the question of Gogol's sexuality and how his ideas on sexuality and gender manifested in his works. Karlinsky focuses on Gogol's unusual relationships with other men and the absence of romantic relationships with women; in Gogol's literature, Karlinsky addresses the homoerotic element in the communal brotherhood ideal and the problematic and frequently reductive role of women. Robert Maguire, in *Exploring Gogol* (1994), addresses the idea of space and boundaries in Gogol's literature as well as seeing and the anxious eye. Maguire explores the power of the word. Yuliya Ilchuk's 2009 article "Nikolai Gogol's Self-Fashioning in the 1830s: The Postcolonial Perspective" addresses Gogol's dual identity in society as a Russified Ukrainian. She notes that while Gogol "passed" for a cultured Russian, he self-exoticized his Ukrainian origins.

In his article "The "All-Seeing" Eye in Gogol" (1967), Leon Stillman discusses both the magical qualities of eyes and also how they related to distance and space. While Stillman does not discuss *Taras Bulba* (he does look at Gogol's other Cossacks in "The

Terrible Vengeance"), the trope of the powerful eye appears throughout Gogol's oeuvre. Judith Kornblatt, in her book *The Cossack Hero in Russian Literature: a study in Cultural Mythology* (1992), describes the origins of the historical Cossacks and their transformation into a cultural myth. Beginning with Pushkin and Gogol's Cossacks, she traces the myth in Russian literature through Soviet times. Saera Yoon' article, "Transformation of a Ukrainian Cossack into a Russian Warrior: Gogol's 1842 "Taras Bulba"" (2005), is a fascinating comparison of the two editions of Gogol's story. She discusses the transformation from a Ukrainian folk tale to a Russian nationalistic epic and how Andriy is seduced by Western culture and ideology. Edyta Bojanowska's book, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism* (2007), delves into Gogol's creation of a national discourse. Through his works, Bojanowska demonstrates Gogol's enthusiasm for the Little Russian theme and his critical treatment of the Russia. She notes that "Gogol's ideal Russians were…Ukrainian Cossacks, whom he presented as staunch supporters of Russian Orthodoxy and autocracy" (371). Crucially, Bojanowska demonstrates how Gogol's national attitudes are embedded in his writings and his ability to both glorify and undermine Russian nationalism in the same text.

LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 address the theoretical methodology of Saïd's Orientalism and subsequent Slavic Orientalisms. Chapter 2 focuses on a definition of the Cossacks and explanation of Cossack culture historically, as well as its portrayal in literature. Chapter 3 looks at Gogol's life and identity. Chapter 4 examines both written editions of *Taras*

Bulba and the 2009 films. The final section presents conclusions and modern repercussions.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Methodology

In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we are masters. In Europe we were Tatars, but in Asia we too are Europeans.
- Fyodor Dostoevsky[3]

What is Orientalism and why is it important in literary and cultural criticism? Edward Saïd defined Orientalism as a "universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" (*Orientalism* 54). Saïd's seminal book *Orientalism* is primarily based on the imperial relationships of Britain and France with their colonies and examines the literatures of these European countries in tandem with the literatures of the Middle East. Men have always divided up objects into categories as a way of making sense of the world; Orientalism is the same but with the idea that Europe is superior to other cultures (39-40). Culture is usually considered separate from politics, especially in literature, but Saïd thought it was impossible to separate culture from history; they are closely intertwined and in constant motion. Saïd argues that although the humanities may not seem to influence political knowledge, they are in no way apolitical; literature cannot be separated from its historical context. Orientalist literature relies on previous literature and on the readers' background knowledge of the myth that they bring to their understanding of the text. Saïd looks to the historical relationships between the colony and colonizer in order to explain the modern relationship between the West and the East and to show how imperial discourse remains in current social interactions.

[3] qtd. in Khalid 697

Saïd succinctly states that "the main battle in imperialism is over land" meaning, that "at some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others." (*Culture* xiii and 7). The notion of land is important for Ukraine as a borderland.[4] More importantly for the Slavic region, "geographical distinctions can be entirely arbitrary…. [And do] not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction" (*Orientalism* 54). "A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call "the land of the barbarians" (53-4).

The process of nation building and the creation of identity occur by designating the otherness of the foreign nation or peoples by the ones in power, basically, by describing what the imperial nation or people lack; in short, identity is derived negatively. The nation in control has "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging" which has a decisive influence in the colonized nations' creation of identity and cultural myths (*Culture* xiii). Additionally, Saïd notes that having knowledge gives one the power over an "other;" basically, having the ability to observe, judge, analyze, and write about demonstrates the advancement of the civilized society. The "good" native follows the rules of the authority, whereas the bad one is stupid and doesn't know what is good for him, so he rebels.

[4] Etymologically, *ukraina* literally means "on the edge or border." In 1187, the word *ukraina* appeared in the Kyiv Chronicle, meaning the land around or pertaining to a center, and in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, it began to acquire meaning as a geographical location on the borderland. Even the city of Kyiv was founded on the edge of the forest and the steppe

Although Orientalism is defined by the relationship between West and East, Saïd notes that the Orient was "European invention," relying on contrasting ideas, values, and traits in order to establish imperial superiority (*Orientalism* 1). Essentially, the Orient existed to define Europe's identity. The Orient represents the exciting, exotic, and external, "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1).

RUSSIAN ORIENTALISM

Saïd himself notes that Russia is indeed an imperial power, but its colonial relationships are different from Western European ones. The relationship between Russia and Ukraine is not one typically viewed as colonizer and colonized in the traditional sense. European colonialism typically recalls distant, overseas colonies that rely on and are subjugated by the colonizer. In the cases of imperialism in Eastern Europe, the colony is adjacent or nearby. Saïd does not deny that the Russian empire constitutes an imperial power, and therefore should be included in his study, but he argues that West European imperial powers exhibit a special cultural unity as well as overseas rule. The geographical perspective provides a clear division between "us" and "them," spatially and physically, that enhances the cultural divide. Additionally, Saïd writes about Orientalism from his own perspective as a Palestinian in America, but his theoretical framework has the great potential to be extended to other areas of conflict and can be used as a tool to better understand these regions.

While some scholars may dispute the validity of an imperialistic relationship between Ukraine and Russia, Myroslav Shkandrij argues that the cultural and literary

output from Ukraine can be aligned with other countries traditionally placed in post-colonial studies (xii). Shkandrij further discusses how the discourse of imperialism in Russia produced an "anti-imperialism counterdiscourse" in Ukraine (xiii). Ukraine is considered to be both within the country but also foreign; sometimes it is completely assimilated, but at other times exoticized and romanticized as a foreign nation. Furthermore, Ukrainian claims for national and cultural distinction have been "denied, censored, or simply ignored – to the extent that even today many Russian intellectuals find them fatuous" (xiii). In both Russian and Polish literary histories, Ukraine is often portrayed as a "wild land" where the people are brutal, violent, and uncivilized (6). Additionally, Ukrainian culture is necessarily dependent on imperial cultures (i.e. Russia, Poland, Lithuania, and Austria). Ukraine's "otherness" helped Russia and Poland create their imperial identities. Russian imperial discourse was based on the three tenets of "orthodoxy, autocracy, and *narodnost'*" which were used to justify its grand mission as a colonizer (11).[5] The choices for the Ukrainians were complete assimilation, persecution, or contempt (19). The intellectual elites represented Ukraine as a nation that grew out of its history, placing particular emphasis on the Zaporozhian Sech and the Hetmanate (the most important of the Cossack communities).[6]

As Nathaniel Knight notes, "while the Orient may be an illusion, the power generated by orientalist knowledge is real and inescapable. At every level, the creation of

[5] *Narodnost'* can be translated as "nationality" or "national character." The root word, *narod*, can mean "people" as well as "nation." The term conveys a feeling of unity among the people and the idea of the collective.

[6] Briefly, the Zaporozhian Sech is a permanent structure housing a community of Cossacks on the Dnieper River and the Hetmanate is another community of Cossacks. See chapter 2 for detailed information on the Cossacks.

alterity through orientalist discourse is inseparable from domination" ("Grigor'ev in Orenburg" 76). Knight suggests that Russia occupies a space between Asia and Europe. "In this regard, [the] image of the 'awkward triptych' of the West, Russia, and the East is quite appropriate, for here is a case in which Occidentalist and Orientalist tropes are deployed simultaneously in an attempt to valorize Russia's standing as a different kind of imperialist power" ("On Russian Orientalism" 707). Knight also agrees that "as a land with more than its fair share of 'others,' the Russian empire is a clear and obvious field in which to apply Saïd's principles and methodology" ("Grigor'ev in Orenburg" 75). However, Knight suggests that Saïd's paradigm lacks the ability to depict the Russian imperial situation accurately, being that Russia occupies a peculiar position between West and East, and notes that "when Russian scholars turned to the east it was often with a sharp awareness of their own supposed backwardness and inferiority in the face of the grand civilization of Britain, France, and Germany" (77). Since Orientalism cannot be cleanly employed with the case of Russia, it requires further examination. Knight astutely notes that instead of being separated from its colonies by the ocean, "in Russia, the "other" was all around" (97). Indeed, as the "other" was so accessible, Russian Imperialism could "appropriate the history of its eastern subjects and neighbors to build a narrative underpinning Russia's cultural domination and colonial expansion" (81).

Adeeb Khalid comments that Saïd's attitude towards imperial powers besides Britain, France, etc., is dismissive and ambivalent (695). Khalid also mentions: "The important thing to recognize here is that… all Russian discourse about Asia, has rather little to do with Asia, and everything to do with Russia's awkward, often unrequited relationship with Europe" (697). Khalid's short article response to Knight concludes that

instead of "demystifying" the Orient, further research should be directed instead towards redefining the "homogenized" West in terms of itself rather than in opposition to the East (699). Although not acknowledged by previous scholars, Saïd himself seems to refer to this when he says "Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is—and does not simply represent—a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world" (*Orientalism* 12). For him, Orientalism is much more about how the Western world has used the orient to manifest its own identity.

Susan Layton is a leading literary scholar in the imperial power of Russia in the Caucasus. She writes that although the Caucasus inspired a larger body of literature, all the regions bordering Russia, from Ukraine to Siberia, were exoticized objects of study in the Romantic period. Layton analyzes Pushkin's "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" and the depiction of the "noble savage." The interactions between the Russian soldiers and the natives in Lev Tolstoy's *Cossacks* and Mikhail Lermontov's *Hero of Our Times* portray the exotic native beauty of the women and the wildness of the mountains. Edward Lazzerini talk about the Crimean Cossacks and argues that "borderlands are not just arenas of civilizational struggles, of semiotic inequality, that produce and reflect relations of power where the colonizer seeks to define and program the borderland as "other" and "same,"" but they create communities based on contradicting ideas (Lazzerini 172). Lazzerini explores how cultural myths of the borderlands are based on the conflicting qualities.

The idea of "nesting orientalisms" evolved from Orientalism and post-colonial studies and speaks to the "recent intertwining of nationalist and "orientalist" discourses

that we see within the emerging postcommunist societies of eastern Europe, the Balkans and the former Soviet Union in particular" (Bakić-Hayden 920). Instead of seeing a clear-cut distinguishing line between East and West, this concept shows how the power of looking is based on a continuum, each nationality regarding the nation to the east or south as the exotic barbarians. After the dissolution of its common state, former Yugoslavian states looked to the past to recreate their own identities, bringing ancient national heroes to the present. Bakić-Hayden remarks on the "disparaging rhetoric" that each nationality group uses for the others, frequently recalling individuals who were fascist or Nazi collaborators: "all Serbs are identified with Chetniks, all Croats with Ustashas and all Muslims with Islamic fundamentalists or balijas" (930). This process of name calling clearly brings to mind how Ukrainians are called Banderites after Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian Nationalist who fought for the freedom and independence of Ukraine with contested associations with the Nazis.

Chapter 2: The Myth of the Cossacks: History and Literary Representations

The Cossack is free and expansive, wild and energetic, uncompromised and unbounded.
-Judith Kornblatt[7]

The phenomenon of the Cossacks and the repercussions of their historical rebellions, with the accentuation of brotherhood and liberty and independence, profoundly affected nationalist movements in Ukraine. This was because, according to historian Mikhail Hrushevsky:

> "For the first time in historical memory, the Ukrainian nation came forth actively as the architect of its own destiny and life, rising to a life-or-death struggle for the realization of its dreams and desires; but, after age-old strivings, bleeding and exhausted in the struggle against insurmountable obstacles, it fell on the battlefield, its hopes and dreams shattered." (qtd. in Plokhy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia* 193)

Nowhere else in Ukrainian history does there appear such a culturally strong and wildly independent group of peoples. The Cossacks are generally regarded as one of the defining elements towards creating a Ukrainian national identity (193). The Zaporozhian Cossacks were central to the process of nation-building in Ukraine, and their legacy extends to the conceptualization of the modern Ukrainian identity and the development of national consciousness.

Judith Kornblatt explains the place of Cossacks in the discourse of Russian identity by exploring the Cossack Myth. While originating in the nineteenth century,

[7] Kornblatt 3

Kornblatt traces the Cossack hero up to Soviet times. The image of the ideal Cossack conveys a sense of wild freedom beyond the control of the empire. Living on the expansive steppes in borderlands was conducive to the Cossacks' identity as rebels, as well as fierce and cunning warriors. In the Romantic period, the image of the exotic Cossack was also linked with an intuitive connection with nature, an intriguing topic for urbanites. Cossacks have been portrayed primarily in Russian and Ukrainian literature, but not exclusively. The Cossacks are frequently compared to the cowboys of the American Wild West and exhibit similar themes of intransience, freedom, prowess with weapons, and comfort around animals in nature.

The modern Ukrainian experience of identity relies heavily on traditional cultural practices and historical events and figures. Bogdan Khmelnitsky and Ivan Mazepa are two controversial and influential Ukrainian Cossacks. Each fought for Ukrainian independence and autonomy with varying degrees of success. Their names are repeated in current times to recall the past attempts to achieve independence for Ukraine. These individuals, in addition to their historical importance, remain vital figures in the modern struggle to create a Ukrainian national identity. They have been raised to mythological status and their names have been invoked in subsequent nationalistic movements.

HISTORY AND ORIGINS

After the Golden Horde lost influence in the fourteenth century, most Ukrainian lands were seized by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Under their control, Ukrainians were exposed to Western (European) ideas, and although practicing Orthodox

Christianity was suppressed under Polish rule, Ukrainian peasants resisted Polish attempts to control them.

The word "Cossack" comes from the Turkish word for "vagrant" or "wanderer" (Kornblatt 6). In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this term was applied mainly to Tatar and Turkish horsemen of the steppes. While the Russian Cossacks were mainly regarded as bandits or border control mercenaries, the Ukrainian Cossacks ardently defended their national religion and cultural traditions against oppressive forces. Additionally, the Zaporozhian and Hetmanate Cossacks created and maintained their own political systems independent from the imperial autocracy.

The Cossacks are known for their strong loyalty to their brothers as well as for protecting the Orthodox faith. Part of being faithful to their own involved xenophobia of other nations, particularly those that were oppressive or disrespectful of them, including the Russians, Poles, Turks, and sometimes Jews.[8] The Cossack's appearance is marked by certain features: wide trousers and distinctive closely cropped hair with a long forelock. They are known for their prowess in battle and their horsemanship. They can eat, drink, sleep, dance the *kazachok*, and carouse to great lengths. The Zaporozhian Cossacks lived in military units composed entirely of men. The wives and children of the men lived separately and saw their men only rarely. The Cossacks represent resilience and don't give up on their ideals. They have a strong connection with nature, particularly the wide steppe and the river, often referring to them as "grandfather."

[8] While Jews are rarely represented as oppressors, we see in *Taras Bulba* that one of the driving forces for initiating a campaign is the financial suppression from the Jews and the alleged desecration of Orthodox people and symbols.

The Cossacks represented the exotic, wild aspects of the Russian soul, and were reclaimed in the artistic output. The Cossack occupied the space between Asia and Europe, the East and the West, which was a vital matter of importance to both Russian and Ukrainian psychology and formation of identity (Kornblatt 15). The Cossacks are both "other" and self: while they were mostly of Slavic ethnicity, they had created a culture completely separate from their other Slavic brothers.[9] An additional contradiction was that they were considered "uncivilized" but were, at the same time, strong believers of the Russian Orthodox faith. The Cossack hero represents the search for freedom from repression. Romantic reexaminations of historical events was used to establish national identity, and Ukrainian Cossacks becoming the exotic "other." While Russians associate the word "Cossack" with bandit, the Cossacks were glorified during the Romantic Movement because they represented the true Russian spirit.

Cossack hosts, or groups, are usually named by the river or body of water that they settled on. Although they were mainly composed of Ukrainians, Russians, and Poles, they also accepted Western Europeans, Turks, Tatars, and sometimes Jews (6). As such, the Cossacks cannot be defined in ethnic terms, as the communities were made up of runaway serfs and subjugated peoples searching for freedom. Although the original Cossacks were mainly peasants and farmers, they soon developed the necessary military skills to fend off Mongol raids. The Cossacks of the Zaporozhian Sech, established in 1552, contributed the most to the myth of the Cossack in nineteenth century literature (6).

[9] "They [gypsies] are depicted as alien or "other," definitely, categorically *not* Russian. The Cossacks, on the other hand, *are* Russian. In fact, they are both "other" and quintessentially "self." Geographically, they live distant from the main centers of Russia, and their over-exuberant revelry and pillaging challenge all civilized decorum. Yet, and here we find the essence of the myth, the popular image would have the

The etymology of the word *Zaporozh'e* comes from "beyond the rapids" (*za porogami*, giving the name of *Zaporozh'e*) of the Dnieper River. Other Cossack hosts, including the Don Cossacks, the Kubans, the Black Sea Cossacks, and the Grebensk and Iaik Cossacks formed along other rivers in the region (8). The Polish authorities attempted to control the Cossacks by having them register for the army and by giving out land rewards in exchange for their military service, but the Cossacks remained faithful to their own political system and leader and were never fully integrated. The Polish also installed a *hetman*, or leader, into the Ukrainian Cossack host, but this action nevertheless failed to create a stable allegiance.[10] As some Cossacks began to receive land and became more settled (*domovitye*), there arose animosity between them and the nomadic (*golutvennye*) hosts. In 1775, Catherine the Great disbanded the Sech and relocated the Cossacks. The Cossacks were generally employed as mercenary border control, but their allegiances wavered and frequent revolts and uprisings were common in assertion of their Cossack values of freedom and autonomy.

COSSACK HEROES: BOGDAN KHMELNITSKY AND IVAN MAZEPA

Bogdan Khmelnitsky (1595?-1657) was the son of a Cossack *sotnik* (from *sot*, "one hundred," meaning commander). He studied in Yaroslavl and then spent two years in Constantinople, where he learned Turkish language and customs. Khmelnitsky was elected the hetman of the Ukrainian Hetmanate in 1648 and was instrumental in leading rebellions against the Poles. With the help of the Tatars, Khmelnitsky waged a civil war

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Cossacks as the principal upholders of the Russian Orthodox faith and preservers of the purity of Rus'." Kornblatt 16.

[10] Russian Cossacks used the term *ataman* from the Tatar word for "leader" (Kornblatt 6).

against the Poles for six years, during which many Jews and Western Ukrainian Greek Catholics were massacred in addition to Poles (Prizel 12). Khmelnitsky's army was powerful and prevailed against the Polish army in many battles. For this, he is referred to by some as a "Modern Moses" and liberator of the Ukrainian people (*Ukraine - The Birth of a Nation* Part 1: ~34mins). However, when the Polish government bribed the Tatars to betray Khmelnitsky and not fight with him, the rebellions were less successful. In June of 1651, an important battle was fought in Berestechko and Khmelnitsky was captured while the Khan and his Tatars fled. After his loss, Khmelnitsky signed a peace treaty in Bila Tserkva in September of 1651. The treaty was not strictly obeyed, and Khmelnitsky continued his rebellions, only less successfully. Khmelnitsky was forced to look to the Ottoman Empire or Muscovy for help, and ended up choosing the Russians because of their shared religion. In 1654, the Treaty of Pereyaslav was drawn between Khmelnitsky and Muscovy, but the terms of the treaty were not clearly laid out; Khmelnitsky wanted to preserve the rights of Cossacks while the Russians wanted complete compliance. Many patriotic Ukrainians blame Khmelnitsky for letting Russia take control of Ukraine, leading to years of oppression. According to Kostomarov:

> Khmelnitsky was a product of his time, subjected to Polish thought and social habits which influenced him at critical moments. Khmelnitsky began an important business, but he did not lead it in the necessary direction. First of all, he committed a historical mistake, which resulted in

> further mistakes and the creation of South Russia went on a different path than the one he had lead it on in the beginning. (35)[11]

Kostomarov identifies Khmelnitsky's move towards Muscovy as a crucial moment in the history of Ukraine; instead of continuing to progress towards autonomy, the Cossack culture essentially began to decline. In spite of being remembered as a daring and ruthless Cossack hetman who fought for autonomy, Khmelnitsky is condemned by modern Ukrainians for the Pereyaslav Treaty, which they consider the greatest mistake in Ukrainian history (*Ukraine – The Birth of a Nation* Part 1: ~3mins). This treaty reinforced the idea of Ukraine as the younger brother, seeking aid and protection from the older brother, Russia. Some scholars argue that his choice was the "lesser of two evils" and that at least with Russia they shared a common history and Orthodox faith, whereas the Poles were Catholic and repressed Ukrainian peasants. Ukraine was Russia's gateway to Europe then and continues to be in modern times (~ 40mins).

To the Russians, the reunification of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples by way of the Pereyaslav Treaty is a vital moment in their story, a moment when the elder brother is united with the younger brother (Wynar 23). This perspective not only reifies the common background of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, but alludes to the superiority of the Russians as they come into their role as protector. As a result of the Pereyaslav Treaty came the Pereyaslav legend, which regarded Muscovy as a region with a shared religion and nationality. The legend was an attempt to quell the outrage of the elite

[11] "Хмельницкий был сын своего века, усвоил польская понятия, польская общественная привычки, и он-то в нем сказались в решительную минуту. Хмельницкий начал дело превосходно, но не повел его впору далее, как нужно было. На первых порах, совершил он историческую ошибку, за которою последовал ряд других, и таким образом, восстание Южной Руси пошло по другому пути, а не по тому, куда вели его вначале обстоятельства."

Ukrainians and ameliorate their assimilation into the Russian state. Hrushevsky criticizes Khmelnitsky for failing to fight for the unified representation of Ukraine and the needs of the people.

Ivan Mazepa (1639-1709) grew up in the Polish court. When there was rumor of Mazepa courting his master's wife, he was exiled to the steppe and joined a community of Cossacks, where he was elected the hetman. As hetman, he was active in improving education and restoring churches, monasteries, and palaces. He had a close relationship with Peter the Great, but when the time came to aid him in battle, Mazepa betrayed him and sided with the Swedes instead. Furious, Tsar Peter commanded Mazepa's execution and the extermination of Cossacks. After Mazepa led a revolt in 1708, the Russians won the battle at Poltava against Mazepa and the Swedes in 1709. Mazepa went to Turkey afterwards, where he died.

Mazepa is a controversial character in that his actions are praised or condemned depending on whether the perspective is Polish, Ukrainian, or Russian. Mazepa is glorified by Ukrainians for his cunning plot to gain Russia's confidence in order to attain more autonomy from Russian influence, but Russians treat Mazepa as a traitor for betraying Russian trust. Mazepa's story attracted Ukrainian nationalists for its romantic characteristics (forbidden romance and betrayal) and his leadership which led him to be considered a "symbol of resistance" (Plokhy, *Ukraine and Russia* 67). The romantic elements of Mazepa's story captured the imagination of Pushkin, who wrote a long poem about the Battle at Poltava. Additionally, Mazepa's story has been retold by many Western Europeans including Lord Byron, Victor Hugo and Voltaire. The figures of Khmelnitsky and Mazepa create an interesting comparison; they are both great Cossack

leaders and proponents of Ukrainian independence, but Mazepa is denounced by Russia while Khmelnitsky's actions were pivotal in Russian history for initiating a union between the Cossack state and Russia.

COSSACKS IN LITERATURE

Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) wrote about Cossacks, translating history and memory into romantic poetry. His portrayals of the Cossacks and Ukraine played a vital role in the formation of the modern Ukrainian identity through the national process of remembering their past, specifically the parts of their history that were unique to them. He created a mythology of the Cossacks that spread through the people, taking on new connotations and meaning. Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) also wrote about the Cossacks, but from the Russian perspective. Pushkin's writings were frequently censored by the Tsar, and he was exiled multiple times to the Caucasus region.[12] Pushkin wrote a Romantic account of the Cossack Pugachev's rebellion in 1773 in his novel *The Captain's Daughter*. The representation of Cossacks in literature keeps the Cossack Myth alive in both Russia and Ukraine.

Taras Shevchenko wrote about the Cossacks, translating history and memory into romantic representations of the discourse on Ukrainian national identity. Shevchenko's portrayals of the Cossacks brought them into the forefront of Ukrainian consciousness, firmly establishing them as the founders of a modern, independent Ukraine. In his poem,

[12] Pushkin loved the Caucasus for its beautiful nature, beautiful women, and exotic culture. His story "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" (*Kavkazskiy Plennik)* was drawn from his time in the mountains and tells the story of a Russian officer held captive by the natives and his relationship with the beautiful daughter of his captor. This story very much exemplifies the Orientalistic characteristics of the imperial attitude of Russia towards the Caucasian natives.

"To the Poles," Shevchenko writes "while we were still Cossacks, before the [Brest] Union, we lived merrily."[13] The trope of fate or fortune is frequently used with Cossacks and although the Cossack is free to choose his fate, he is still controlled by this outside force; as "the river flows to the sea but doesn't flow back," so the Cossack must move forward, dictated by the forces of nature.[14] Shevchenko uses the words *rodnoj* and *chuzhoj* to make the distinction between the land of the Cossacks and the alien lands. In "Taras's Night (*Tarasova Nich*)", Shevchenko describes Ukraine being attacked from all sides by the Poles, Russians, and Tatars, showing how Ukraine is surrounded by enemies. He writes about the strong feeling of belonging on the steppes, and not belonging anywhere else. For example, in his poem "Thought (*Dumka*)," he writes: "in foreign lands the people are different, it is hard to live with them."[15] Although praising the glory of Cossacks in general and writing about some exceptionally heroic leaders, Shevchenko never misses a moment to reiterate how Bogdan Khmelnitsky made a terrible mistake. In fact, he refers to Khmelnitsky's grave as Ukraine's grave because after him, the Cossacks fell under the power of their enemies, and Shevchenko uses this image to show that the times of the Cossacks is over. He also describes Russians desecrating graves, which emphasizes the ruthlessness of the foreigners, who have no respect for local culture.

Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* tells the story of a young Russian noble officer, Piotr Andreich Grinev, and his experiences during the *Pugachevshchina*, or Pugachev rebellion. In *The Captain's Daughter*, the Cossack leader Pugachev plays two roles of "other": first, he is a helper-native, knowledgeable about the land, and secondly,

[13] "Ще як були ми козаками, А унії не чуть було, Отам-то весело жилось" (51)
[14] Dumka "тече вода в синє море та не витікає"

a fearsome Cossack leader. Pushkin relies on stereotypical attributes of Cossacks in his story, particularly when Pugachev expresses his desire for vodka, not tea, as vodka is a more manly drink (Pushkin 17). Although the Cossack is illiterate and uneducated, he is able to navigate the wilderness as well as successfully wage war against the Russian government and nobility. The Cossacks' prowess in battle is apparent when they take Fort Belogorsk with ease; the weak Russians are unable to protect themselves. Additionally, the Cossacks have a council of equals and discuss their plans logically with each other. The Russian council, by contrast, is based on a hierarchy in which the elders have more say over the ones with more military experience (67). In Orenburg, the Russians are unwilling to attack and go to battle, betraying their lack of experience in military proceedings; the experienced Captain and Pyotr argue that an offensive attack would be the most effective military procedure. Even though the native possesses some impressive traits, he is still not a civilized Russian. Piotr and Pugachev's interactions humanize him and show that he has honor, respects his guests, and is capable of compassion. Although he is considered to be a "semi-barbarian" by the Russians, Pugachev attempts to disprove the stereotype (45). He even says: "You can see I'm not as bloodthirsty as your people claim" (93). Pushkin's novella is based on a Russian and how he reacts to the Cossacks, not about the Cossacks themselves. The representation of the Cossacks is realistic rather than mythological.

[15] "На чужині не ті люде, Тяжко з ними жити!"

Chapter 3: Mykola Hohol or Nikolai Gogol

How are we going to divide up Gogol? Is he a Russian or a Ukrainian classic? We share him. We share our pride in him.
-Mikhail Shishkin[16]

Nikolai Gogol defies categorization. As a writer in the transition from Romanticism to Realism, he also switches themes from the Ukrainian and Russian countryside to the cityscape. Robert Maguire writes that Gogol has been

> proclaimed a realist and fantast; a subtle student of the human heart and a creator of cardboard characters; a revolutionary and reactionary; a monger of the lewd and a hierophant of the sublime; a pathological liar and an honest anatomist of the soul; a self-promoter and self-immolator; a typical Russian and a typical Ukrainian; a narrow nationalist and a universal genius; a jejune jokester and a tragic poet. (*Gogol from the Twentieth Century* vii).

In spite of the difficulty of trying to define Gogol, many scholars attempt to do so. While they may strongly assert their arguments about Gogol's identity and writing style, this is only possible by ignoring or slighting some of his other works or life circumstances. Gogol is an enigma; no one really understood him in his own time and it is doubtful that he will ever be fully understood in modern times either. Although we may never comprehend the man himself, we can be sure of his biographical data.

[16] Shishkin article in Guardian, trans. Marian Schwartz.

Gogol (1809-1852) was born in the Poltava region, in Sorochintsy, a village founded by Cossacks. Most of the village was russified, but a small number of inhabitants maintained their native language and culture. Born Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol-Ianovskii, Gogol dropped the Polish-sounding name in order to distance himself from the stigma of his Polish origins and to better present himself to the Russian nobility.[17] His father, Vasilii Afanasevich, was a playwright who died in 1825; his mother, Marja Ivanovna, was a devoutly religious woman and aided Gogol with his work monetarily and by supplying him with details about Ukrainian life. Gogol was a student in Nezhin and left for St. Petersburg after graduating. He had a number of unsuccessful careers as an actor, a poet, history professor, and a civil servant. His first publication, *Hans Küchelgarten*, was a romantic poem in the German style, published in 1829. The poem was poorly received and Gogol frantically collected as many copies of the manuscript as he could, beginning what would become his habit of burning unsatisfactory manuscripts. *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka* was published in 1831, with a second volume released in 1832. After both Pushkin and Belinsky praised his "Evenings," Gogol began to be accepted in the literary world. The volume of *Mirgorod Tales*, which included *Old World Landowners*, *Taras Bulba*, *Viy*, and *The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovitch Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovitch*, was published in 1835. Gogol spent many years abroad in Europe for his health, mainly in Germany and Italy, where he wrote *Dead Souls*. Gogol revised a number of his stories, including *Taras Bulba* and *The Portrait*. When he struggled with the second part of *Dead*

[17] When Catherine the Great incorporated Ukrainian regions into the Russian empire, the elite had to present proof of their nobility in order to maintain their rights. According to Gregg, Gogol's family took the name from a landed Cossack colonel, Ostap Hohol, thereby creating a noble lineage. See Leon Stilman's "Nikolaj Gogol and Ostap Hohol."

Souls and burned the manuscripts again. In 1847, Gogol published *Selected Passages from Correspondence with My Friends*, a collection of essays on a range of topics displaying Gogol's moral beliefs. This work was poorly received and many of his critics and colleagues believed that Gogol was losing his genius. In his later years, Gogol grew more religious and anxious about moral purity and in 1852, he starved himself to death in his overzealous and ascetic attempts at self-purification.

GOGOL: DUAL IDENTITY

Gogol only fully realized his Ukrainian origins when he arrived in St. Petersburg and felt himself a foreigner, an "other" in imperial Russian society. Given his provincial Ukrainian upbringing, Gogol set about hiding that aspect of his identity and adapting to Russian cultured society. Gogol built a hybrid identity on the awareness of social power and his ability to "pass" as a cultured Russian without fully incorporating Russian linguistic and cultural qualities. Gogol's self-representation came across as "highly ambivalent….simultaneously mimicking and menacing the colonial authority" (Ilchuk 206). Yuliya Ilchuk provides an analysis of Gogol's social relationships and how he was frequently referred to as *khokhol*, reduced to an exotic and stubborn creature, or a possession, that must be "tamed." The term *khokhol* refers to a Ukrainian peasant with the connotation of rural backwardness and can be translated as "Uke" or "hick" (Bojanowska 2). Specifically, the term describes the Cossacks' hairstyle of the long forelock which further proves the basis of Ukrainian identity in the Cossacks. Gogol used this term in the diminutive form (*khokhlik*) for himself, showing how he coopted the term to create his own identity. The frequent use of the term *khokhol* is a tool of Orientalizing

an "other;" the constant repetition and voicing of the stereotypes is what brings them into being and gives them meaning. Gogol seems to have accepted this aspect of his identity in society and exaggerated it to suit his own means. Gogol self exoticized his identity as a means of seizing power, by emphasizing his "otherness" in order to establish identity.

Gogol's names reflect a cultural hybrid as well. The hyphenated name carried the meaning of a dual identity: Ukrainian and Polish. The name of Gogol had been taken on by his grandfather by claiming ancestry to a Cossack warrior Ostap Gogol in order to prove nobility. By dropping the Polish name, Gogol was embracing his supposed Cossack origins. The ancestry was never fully proved, however, so the name retains a sense of fabrication. In Ukrainian, the name Gogol is pronounced like Hohol which bears a phonetic similarity with the term *khokhol*, adding another layer of identity to his names and making him Hohol the *khokhol*. Additionally, the word Gogol is a type of duck (white with dark markings on the head and wings) which Gogol inserted into his stories.

Gogol spoke and wrote in Russian but used Ukrainian phrases and proverbs as well as his knowledge of the Ukrainian "dialect" to make characters more authentic. In Mikhail Hrushevsky's diary entry on Nov 14, 1883, he commented on Gogol's use of Russian rather than Ukrainian and that he could have "greatly helped the Ukrainian people and literature" by writing in his native language instead as his contemporary Ukrainian, Taras Shevchenko, was doing (Plokhy, *Unmaking Imperial Russia* 438). Significantly, George Luckyj remarks that "Gogol' was a Little Russian and Shevchenko a Ukrainian," commenting on Gogol's romantic and historical inclinations as opposed to Shevchenko's nationalism. By writing in Russian on Ukrainian themes, Gogol "exploit[ed] this cultural hybridity without resolving it" (Glaser 14). Although Gogol

wrote in the vein of Russian nationalism, his personal beliefs are difficult to extract from his personal writings. Gogol was mysterious on purpose, leaving the reader to figure out the puzzle.

Gogol's travels outside of Russia greatly influenced his writing. As Fanger notes, Gogol's creative capacity was magnified by rushing away to a foreign place (243). Gogol's "eye" was only able to fully portray Russia by removing himself from Russia to another country. Maguire also addresses Gogol's travels in terms of space and crossing borders. By traveling to Europe, Gogol was able to accurately portray Russian people and culture from a distance, removing himself from their direct influence.

Gogol had a troubling relationship with women, particularly with his mother. He frequently begged his mother for money and, in the beginning of his literary career, for details of traditional Ukrainian life. Marja Gogol was devoutly religious and instilled all her superstitious anxieties in her son. Gogol's religious fever complicated the few close relationships that he had with young men, making him feel guilty for his homosexual desire.[18] There is no evidence that Gogol had any romantic relationships with women (he even made up a passionate love in a letter to his mother) and he expressed anxiety when others, such as acquaintances and sisters, discussed getting married. His conclusion was that all sexual desire is evil and should be punished.

GOGOL THE HISTORIAN

Gogol came into prominence as a writer at the time of Pushkin, which saw a decline in the importance of poetry and a rise in expressions of nationalism through

[18] For an extensive study of Gogol's sexuality, see Karlinsky's *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*

literature. Maguire notes that "there was a strong feeling that a great writer, a "Russian Homer," must arise to give expression to the soul to the restless and burgeoning *narod*, or "people"" (4-5). Gogol successfully relayed the everyday man through his *Evenings* as well as his Petersburg tales by portraying characters in generalized situations. Gogol was advised to write about his homeland by fellow Ukrainian writer and ethnographer Orest Somov as Ukraine themes in stories, songs, and folklore was popular in Russian society at that time due to the Romantic nature of the material. Gogol's *Evenings* was well received; famously, Pushkin greatly enjoyed the tales and found them very funny. Thus, Gogol began his career by writing about bucolic Ukrainian peasants in everyday situations instilled with elements of superstitious folklore.

Although Gogol spent a lot of time researching Ukrainian customs and details of cultural habits, mainly through letters with his mother, he did not do this to counteract the pre-existing stereotypes of Ukrainians held by Russians: instead, his writings reinforced these beliefs. Very little of his knowledge of Ukrainian traditions and history was based on acquired knowledge and inaccuracies have been found in his stories.[19]

Gogol was an avid student of history. While he proved himself inept at teaching it, he delved into the history of Ukraine (Little Russia) with the intention of writing a history of the region. In the nineteenth century surge of nationalism, the origins of the Great and Little Russians was a hotly contested topic. Gogol treated the history of Ukraine and the Cossacks as being the same thing. Gogol describes the role of the historical Cossacks as being similar to the Teutonic Knights, defenders of the faith with

[19] Wedding scene in Sorochintsy fair. See Glaser 39.

the "primary goal: to make war against the infidels and preserve the purity of their faith" (Karpuk 442). Bojanowska quotes Gogol on the origins of the Cossacks:

> "This [Little Russia] was a land of fear, and therefore only a warlike people, strong in its unity, could develop here, a desperate people whose entire life would be fostered by war. And the immigrants, whose exuberant will could not stand laws and authority…settled and chose the most dangerous place, in full view of the Asian conquerors, the Tatars and the Turks….This people, known by the name of the Cossacks, represented one of the most extraordinary phenomena of European history that was perhaps alone responsible for arresting the devastating spread of the two Mohammedan peoples threatening to devour Europe." (139)

In the above quotation, Bojanowska comments on the inherent war-like quality of the Cossacks based on their geographical location. The second point of interest is that the Cossacks are immigrants; while historically accurate, the fact that the Cossacks are not actually from the land is at odds with the Cossack myth linking them to nature and the land. Third, we see the Cossacks as defenders of the border, keeping the uncivilized Muslims from conquering Europe, which in this passage, includes Russia and Ukraine. Additionally, Kornblatt suggests that Gogol was "attracted to the image of the Cossack on a sexual level" (19).

Chapter 4: Contradictory Cossacks in *Taras Bulba*

[Bulba] was a character who could only have sprung forth from the harsh fifteenth century in that half-nomadic corner of Europe, when the whole of primitive Russia's south, abandoned by its princes, was laid waste and left in ruins by the relentless onslaught of the Mongol marauders

- Nikolai Gogol[20]

Taras Bulba stands out within Gogol's oeuvre. While the story somewhat follows the theme of the Ukrainian tales, it is not about charming peasants from the village and their cultural practices; it is not like Gogol's comical caricatures or grotesque Arabesques. *Taras Bulba* is, instead, a historical novel, extremely romantic, and hyperbolic. Although many scholars question the value of the novel in Gogolian studies and dismiss it, this epic story holds a strong place in Slavic literature. While the story line itself is fairly straightforward, Gogol's manner and approach yield interesting results, especially considering there were two redactions during his life and several film versions released in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Gogol's *Taras Bulba* tends to be dismissed or overlooked precisely because it does not quite fit into sweeping criticisms of Gogol's style. The nineteenth century critic Belinsky discouraged Ukrainian authors from writing in Ukrainian because he saw Ukrainian culture as a subset of Russian and felt that literature should be published in Russian to appeal to the greater public. Vladimir Nabokov, a twentieth century Russian author, translator, and literary critic, easily dismisses Gogol's early Ukrainian works as silly stories, saying that "When I want a good nightmare[,] I imagine volume after

volume of *Dikanka* and *Mirgorod* stuff about ghosts haunting the banks of the Dnieper, burlesque Jews and dashing Cossacks" (32). Additionally, Valery Bryusov states that

> *Taras Bulba* [is] a rather mediocre tale which will long continue to be read only because *Dead Souls* will be. You have only to try eliminating *The Inspector General* and *Dead Souls* from the corpus of Gogol's writings, and what remains of Gogol? An ordinary writer no different from dozens of other ordinary writers, who are forgotten by dozens [sic] as well. But if you eliminate *Taras Bulba,* Gogol still remains the same – a powerful and immortal writer. (154)

Simon Karlinsky, however, suggests that *Taras Bulba* is the best known of Gogol's works, because it satisfied both Tsarist and Soviet ruling powers by glorifying Russian nationalism and implying the unity of Russian and Ukrainian peoples.[21] Additionally, Donald Fanger posits that the normality of the story made it accessible to conservative readers who didn't understand Gogol's originality and that Ukrainian nationalists like it because it glorifies their Cossack past (99).

Gogol's novel was strongly influenced by Russian and Ukrainian folk ballads, Sir Walter Scott's romances, and Homer's *Iliad*.[22] Gogol expertly draws on Western sources and adapts them to the romantic aspect of Slavic history. From the folk tradition, *Taras Bulba* uses the tropes of two lovers on opposing sides of a war, a Jewish character, a father-son relationship, and a helpless, weeping mother. While the novel is historically accurate in some ways (for example, the relationship between the Poles and Ukrainians

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[20] Gogol, "Taras Bulba" 8

[21] Like the majority of literary critics, Karlinsky is referring to the second redaction of the story.

[22] Erlich suggests that *Dead Souls* shows influences from *The Iliad* as well. 127.

and the description of the Sech), it was not set in a definite place in time; it is generally considered to be set in the mid-sixteenth or seventeenth century.[23]

Gogol originally released *Taras Bulba* in 1835 but he continued to revise it. In 1842, he republished the story, this time with more pro-Russian political themes. The majority of critics say that in the second edition the story is more flushed out with better writing, many do not address the two editions at all.[24] Saera Yoon's article addresses the differences between the 1835 and 1842 versions. Regarding Gogol's motivation for rewriting the story, Yoon quotes Wasyl Sirskyj, who suggests that "the demands of Russian benefactors who granted Gogol financial aid" were the primary reason, rather than a shift in ideology (432). However, Yoon submits that the variations between editions reflect Gogol's changing attitudes. Yoon demonstrates how Andriy is seduced by Western thought and a culture of freedom that is in direct opposition to Ukrainian Cossack culture, which encourages uniformity and collectivity. Yoon's analysis shows how the original version of *Taras Bulba* was very much a Ukrainian story, demonstrated by fewer uses of the root *russk-*, which tended to appear as a way of distinguishing class rather than marking nationalism.

In 1909, Russia produced a silent film version of *Taras Bulba*, the first time that the novel appeared on the silver screen. The novel had such appeal to Western audiences that subsequent film versions were created by the Germans (1924), French (1936), British (1938 and 1962), Italians (1963) and Czechs (1987). In 2009, for the bicentennial of

[23] Karlinsky 80 some of the historical inaccuracies are the siege of Dubno, which took place in the sixteenth century, and the Kyivan Academy not being founded until the seventeenth century, although the story claims to take place in fifteenth century.

Gogol's birth, both Russia and Ukraine produced film versions of *Taras Bulba*. In Russia, there was a social context for remaking Russian classical literature in accessible film or television versions to be attractive to youth. The Russian version, directed by Vladimir Bortko, exaggerates the Russian patriotic portions of the novel and portrays Russians and Ukrainians as one people distinct from the Polish. The Ukrainian version, directed by Evhenyj Bereznyak and Petr Pynchuk, was curiously titled *Thoughts about Taras Bulba* (*Duma pro Tarasa Bul'bu*) and labeled a "television feature film" (*televizijnyj xudozhnij fil'm*). The Ukrainian version emphasizes the traditional and cultural features of the story as well as the familial relationship between Bulba and his sons. For both Russians and Ukrainians, *Taras Bulba* recalls a romantic and idealized historical phenomenon that is essential for establishing national identity. For Ukrainians, the story reflects a longing for freedom and independence.

The Cossacks exist in a geographical borderland between Russia, Poland, and Turkey. In the story, the Cossacks express their opinions about these other nations in Orientalist terms. As such, in both the novel and films, the process of creating and separating identities relies on distinguishing between "us" and "them." Women play a special role in Orientalism, frequently reduced to an exotic beauty, an object of sexual desire. Exotic women must be conquered and tamed, and they are frequently taken back by the conqueror to their civilized land. The Oriental gaze distinguishes between the foreigner among the locals (i.e. Jews) and the foreigner who is far away (i.e. Turks, Tatars). While the differences between "them" and "us" are emphasized, the local

[24] Karlinsky says that "it is in the revised 1842 version that Gogol finally learned how to write a successful historical novel" (78) and Maguire says that it is "wrought with a sustained skill, conviction, and passion

foreigner provides a service (the Jews sell food, drink, and other goods) while the distant foreigner provides an exotic enemy.

The trajectory of the story follows a hardened Cossack, Taras Bulba, and his two sons, Ostap and Andriy. After the boys return from their seminary education, Bulba whisks them off to the Sech, where he hopes that they will have a chance to prove themselves in battle. After news reaches the Sech of Orthodox churches being desecrated by Jews and Poles, they set off on a campaign and end up laying siege to the Polish city of Dubno. There, Andriy reconnects with a Polish noble woman, whom he fell in love with Kyiv, and betrays the Cossack brotherhood by fighting on the side of the Poles. During the battle, Bulba confronts and kills Andriy, while Ostap is taken prisoner by the Poles to Warsaw and publicly executed.

In the first section below, I discuss how the Cossacks exhibit both civilized and barbaric qualities. In the second section, I discuss the Cossacks' relationships and attitudes towards foreigners. In the third section, I outline the role of gender in the novel, focusing on the minimized role of the women in Cossack life and the communal brotherhood. The fourth section discusses the role that eyes and watching play in the story as a means of marking plot developments, power play between the characters, and even as lexical markers of Ukrainian-ness or Russian-ness. The fifth section examines how Russian nationalism was incorporated into the story. The sixth section compares the films and discusses their divergences from the texts and cinematography.

Gogol's presentation of Cossack identity is based on contradictions; while glorifying brotherhood, it also uses violence as a basis of honor. Although the Cossacks

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that make it an almost perfect work of art" (*Exploring Gogol*, 274)

demonstrate a civilized governmental system based on unanimous agreement, they are, at the same time, brutally violent and wary of education. In his writings, Gogol reconciles these contrasting values and beliefs as well as culturally nationalistic themes.

STRUCTURE OF THE SECH: DEMOCRATIC OR BARBARIC?

The Cossacks express conflicting characteristics of barbarism and civilization. The attitude towards education, the comparison to a schoolhouse, and the organization of the government are strong examples. In historical accounts, the Zaporozhian Sech is typically connected with the criminal factor, but Gogol makes light of this point and focuses instead on the democratic features of the Sech: those linked with the ideas of brotherhood and community through the metaphor of the schoolyard.

From the beginning of the story, Bulba shows disdain for the cassock uniform the boys wear and for their studying books. Although he thinks that a Seminary education is unnecessary for life after school on the Sech, he forces his son, Ostap, to finish his schooling. Education and perseverance are, therefore, qualities that are praised and necessary at one point in life, but completely unnecessary in the next. Even on the Sech, it is considered unnecessary to train in combat or instruct their young recruits, declaring it a "waste of time…. [and] tiresome,…. The rest of the time was spent carousing, a sign of the raging sweep of the Cossacks' free spirit" (Gogol, *Taras Bulba* 28).[25] The Cossacks are expected to learn on the battlefield, through experience. The practice of training for combat suggests too much structure, which contradicts the Cossack's "free spirit." While the aversion toward structured and religious education can be seen as a sign of the

Cossacks' barbaric qualities, this idea is at odds with their tradition of requiring an elementary Seminary education.

The daily life of the Cossacks is likened multiple times to a schoolhouse and the brotherly ties to a tight-knit group of students, but "instead of the subjugation that united pupils in a school, the Cossacks turned their backs on their fathers and mothers of their own free will, and abandoned their homes" (29). The Sech is not a home and there are no parents; it is an unruly gathering of boys who do whatever they want. Gogol continues to emphasize this comparison by describing the Sech with its sixty companies that "resembled separate, independent republics, and resembled even more a school or academy where students are given full board" (31). When Bulba confronts his other son, Andriy, the young man is likened to a schoolboy caught in a fight by the schoolmaster, his father. In addition to being described as students, the Cossacks are also compared to immature and impulsive children: "when there are a few crumbs of food they will gobble them up, and when there are mountains of food, again nothing will be left" (58). By setting up an "ideal" society of brothers, Gogol is able to outline both its benefits and shortcomings. Ostap and Andriy are "fascinated by the wild ways of the Sech and the rough code of justice, which at times struck them as too harsh in such a willful republic" (31). Although they may be able to fully express their Cossack "free spirit," there are still strict rules to abide by.

While the Sech appears to be organized along fair and democratic lines, we see that while the elections need to be voted on unanimously, the crowd is easily swayed. In

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[25] All English quotations from *Taras Bulba* come from Peter Constantine's translation. All Russian quotes come from Gogol's *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij v odnom tome* (2013).

actuality, there is a narrow expression of free will. Interestingly, the Cossacks are united by a desire for freedom, but although the Cossacks join the brotherhood in search of freedom, they end up being part of a single-minded and relatively superficial group. [26] Group mentality takes over and there is a lack of individual thought; the one who thinks differently, does not fit in. Andriy provides a remarkable example of a Cossack straying from the brotherhood, although it could be argued that the Polish girl enchants him and draws him away. However, when Andriy rides out onto the battlefield, it certainly seems to be of his own free will. The virtue of free will is not valued by the Cossacks when it draws one of their own away from the brotherhood. Karpenko discusses how Gogol portrays the democracy of the Cossacks more in the second version and emphasizes the voice of the Cossack masses over the voice of the Ataman (80-1). Gogol portrays democracy as unanimous collective thought and communal; his representation is not about each individual deciding things for himself or having the free will to think something else.[27] As a "Russian hero is, and should be, endowed with a self-renunciation that gives priority to communal unity," Andriy's enlarged sense of self removes him from his community of brothers; the inevitable result, of course, is his death.

Andriy's character is very interesting in that he first embodies everything a Cossack should be, but later embodies everything a Cossack most despises. Andriy is very resourceful and cunning, an emotional fighter; his only weakness is for a woman's beauty. For Andriy, battle is like alcohol: "Battle for Andriy was crazed bliss and

[26] Kornblatt suggests that Cossack rituals fall in line with Bakhtin's Carnivalesque; in the election scene in Gogol's Taras Bulba, the new hetman is anointed with mud, hierarchy is reversed. Also, Karpenko talks about the earth being holy through folklore tradition 84-5.

drunkenness. He was transformed—his head blazed; everything before his eyes flashed and flickered as horses fell thundering to the ground; heads rolled; and he rode intoxicated through the whistle of bullets and the flashing of savers, striking out left and right, not heeding the blows that were dealt him" (51). Because of his manic drive in battle, he is able to recklessly encounter things that composed and experienced Cossacks couldn't face. As the line crosser, Andriy senses the extreme and stilted confines of Cossack life: "He had been raised in the Seminary and in rough military life and, incapable of responding to her words, felt indignant at his Cossack nature" (67). Not only is Andriy's battle lust compared to drunkenness, but even the Sech is portrayed as "a kind of uninterrupted feast that began noisily and had no end…. This out-and-out feasting had something bewitching about it. The revelers were not drinking away their troubles, but were on a crazed and exuberant spree. A man who came to the Sech….gave himself over to freedom and the camaraderie of his peers, who like him were revelers without family and with no other home than the open sky and the eternal carousing soul" (28-9).

The Cossacks have already been shown to live to extremes, as "Zaporozhians never died of old age" (36). This lifestyle is quite clear in Gogol's novel in the instances of war and drunkenness. There is an interesting relationship between these two modes: although it is forbidden to drink while on a campaign, "because a drunkard on a campaign does not deserve Christian burial!," the violence of a battle is compared to a feast, where the images of spilled blood and wine become one: "It seemed that the Cossacks were on a carousing rampage rather than a campaign" (46, 50). The Cossacks

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[27] "[принцип] массового многоголосия, выражающего коллективное мышление рады…. Так Гоголь… раскрывает характер демократизма в общественных отношениях казачества" Karpenko 84

are incapable of living without either fighting or drinking; there is no middle ground: "One cannot expect men not to get drunk when there is nothing to do!" (74). Everything that the Cossacks do is violent to the extreme. Even when Andriy betrays the brotherhood, this betrayal reaches the point where he actually kills other Cossacks. "All of Taras Bulba's old comrades were dead. It was as if there had been a feast, a great, wild feast, and now all the cups and plates were lying in pieces, not a drop of wine was left, the servants and guests had stolen the precious chalices and goblets, and the host stood ruefully in the great hall wringing his hands, and cursing the day he had summoned all to carouse" (116).

The Cossacks not only live on the border of geographic regions, but they also occupy the space between civilized society and the savages to the east: "as border people, the Cossacks themselves incorporated opposites, reconciling elements on the frontier of wilderness and civilization" (Kornblatt 5). They are educated savages, cunning warriors, and fierce schoolboys. While the fighting/feasting metaphor is common in epics, in *Taras Bulba* it serves to emphasize the contradiction between the barbaric carousing of the Cossacks and the strict rule against drinking while on a campaign where the focus is instead on the brutality and violence of war. The Cossacks are neither fully civilized nor fully barbaric, occupying a place on the Orientalist spectrum between Russia, Poland, Turkey, and Asia.

FOREIGNERS AND OTHERS: ATTITUDES AND THOUGHTS

The foreigners in *Taras Bulba* include Turks, Poles, Tatars, and Jews. While the Cossacks hold a negative opinion of Turks and Tatars in general, Jews and Poles are

portrayed even more negatively. The Cossacks do not represent an imperial power, as they occupy the space between Poland (which represents a more European West) and Turkey (clearly, the exotic East). The Cossacks disagree with the Poles on matters of independence and control, while the issues with Turks and Tatars are usually about material possession and who has pillaged what from whom. Additionally, while Poland and Turkey are distant "others," Jews and Tatars are foreigners who live in close quarters with the Cossacks. Due to the duality of this position, they are able to act as transporters, both of people and information. The geographical location of the Cossacks demonstrates Bakić-Hayden's idea of nesting orientalisms.

In Gogol's novel, foreigners are frequently impressed by the Cossacks' skills, both in trade and in war tactics: "Foreigners of the time were astounded by the truly unusual capabilities of the Cossack. There was no craft he was not master of. He could distill vodka, harness a cart, and grind gunpowder; he was adept at blacksmithing and metalwork; and on top of all that, he could feast recklessly, drink, and carouse as only a Russian can" (10). During battle, Bulba orders a strategic maneuver of arranging their carts around an enemy, "a way of fighting in which the Cossacks were unmatched" (100). Additionally, "the foreign engineer was amazed at this tactic [passing loaded guns to the front in order to sustain fire], which he had never seen before. "These Cossacks are valiant men!" he told the Poles. "Armies in other lands would do well to adopt their methods! .... The French engineer clasped his head in dismay at the [Polish] cannoneers' ineptness, and rushed to aim the cannons himself, despite the ceaseless onslaught of fiery

Cossack bullets" (102).[28] A third military tactic involved outsailing Turkish pursuers by "heading straight into the line of the sun, making himself invisible to the Turkish ships." (107). "In those days it was quite common for foreign barons and counts to visit Poland, drawn by the thrill of seeing a half-Asiatic corner of Europe. In their view, Muscovy and the Ukraine were completely Asiatic" (128). In Gogol's historical writings, he ascribed the Cossacks' success in war to tactics of Asian influences, particularly the ferocity in battle, swift raids, and ingenuity.

Gogol described Poles primarily through images of rich Polish noblemen. The girl that Andriy is entranced by is "frivolous, as all Polish girls are" as she adorns him with her sparkling diadem, earrings, and "flimsy blouse with its frills and gold embroidery" (20). The soldiers are decked out in "opulent armor [with a]… retinue of fifty-one servants" (104). The Poles are frequently painted as superficial, concentrating on their outward appearance. They may be beautifully dressed, but too poor to buy a cup of vodka or bread, and they have to pay their retinue of servants. Loyalty is not a factor here; the only thing bonding the Poles together is their money and religion. The Jews also have bad opinions of the Poles: "They [Poles] might have nothing to eat, but I bet you they'll buy pearls!" and "What a greedy race these Poles are! You'd never find a Jew like that!" (79, 125). The Jews also comment on the intelligence of the Polish guardsman, who "was obviously unable to count above a hundred" (129). "The Cossacks were not to be duped by empty promises, for they knew what a Polish oath was worth…. Do not trust the cursed Poles, the dogs will deceive us!" (136). While in the *Mirgorod* tale, the Cossacks'

[28] Just as the Cossacks are more competent in *The Captain's Daughter*, the enemy is inept and the Cossacks are victorious.

conflict with the Poles rests on the struggle for independence (an imperial issue), the second redaction places the Cossacks on the side of Russia in the paradigm of East versus West.

In the novel, the rumors of "unclean Jews" "holding [churches] in pledge" instigate the campaign against the Poles (42). As such, the Jews' position in the Sech is precarious; although it seems like they make money selling food and drink to the Cossacks, it was common for the Cossacks to carry out drunken raids of the Jews' tents and wagons. Additionally, once the rumor against the Jews is spread, the Cossacks run around killing all the Jews at the Sech. Even though they are set up as the enemy in the beginning through the rumors, it is only with their help and cunning that Bulba is able to make it to Warsaw to see Ostap's execution. The Jews are adaptable and good at turning any situation to their advantage and "[Bulba was] amazed at the feistiness of the Jewish spirit" (99, 48). Additionally, Jews were referred to as "Polish spies" in Gogol's historical writing (Bojanowska 158).

The Turks are mainly discussed in the story of Shilo, who was captured and enslaved by the Turks. Shilo showed potential as a brutal taskmaster. He converted to Islam, but only in order to trick his way into a position of power, eventually releasing all the Cossack slaves and sailing back to the Sech. Shilo accomplished this trickery by convincing the Turks to drink wine, which, as Muslims, they were not used to drinking. This anecdote shows the base brutality of the Turks and how easily they can be tricked by the Cossacks.

GENDER ROLES ON THE SECH

There is a common thread through Gogol's stories where male characters who seek relations with women – be they platonic, sexual, or marital – are punished with death or some other bad consequences.[29] As Fanger points out, "throughout Gogol's work the erotic threatens the sensitive male with annihilation" (100). The problem is when man is not in control of himself; if he controls the woman (e.g. Bulba and his wife), then women are okay, but uncontrolled women are a threat. The Sech is a place of hyper-masculinity defined by a close brotherhood and the act of war. In the case of Andriy, an evil woman draws him away from the brotherhood and influences him to act independently. As Yoon demonstrates in her analysis, the values of materialism and independence are indicators of the invasion of the West and, in the second redaction, Gogol is revealing his uneasiness by promoting Russian values (431). The threat of women and the West are conflated in the Polish girl.

The Polish noble girl exists only through her exotic body parts and her powerful gaze. She is introduced with laughter, her consistently brilliant, flashing eyes, and her skin as "white as snow" (19). The Polish girl does not speak using words, but communicates through her eyes instead:

> There was so much in those eyes. Her look, which bespoke an inability to express the feelings that overwhelmed her, was more tangible to Andriy than any words could have been….Feelings stirred which until then had been under a heavy yoke but now felt liberated, free, and ready to pour out in a fierce stream of words...[She looks] into his eyes like an obedient

[29] For example, "Viy," "Diary of a Madman," "Nevsky Prospekt," and even "The Overcoat." Karlinsky 35-6

> child. If words could only describe what is in a young woman's glance! (68)

Andriy is entranced by the feelings and emotions that he eyes express; these kinds of emotions are not possible in the Cossack brotherhood. Although typically representing freedom, the Cossacks are not allowed the freedom to think differently from their brothers; Andriy's attraction to women demonstrates his alterity and the stifling power of the communal brotherhood. Andriy is looking for words and feelings outside the simplistic narrative of the Sech of nationalism, glory, and religion.

Women also seem to fit into the category of "other," since they are not allowed on the Sech, and each woman plays a reductive role in the story. The only women we meet are Bulba's wife, the Tatar servant woman, and the Polish love interest, and two out of the three are foreign. The women remain nameless (except in the films), simple, small creatures who flit around the main Cossack characters. Although Bulba does explicitly talk about the narrow role of women in terms of the Cossack warrior, the role of women is fairly apparent from the story; there are only three possibilities: wife/mother, seductress/witch, and servant. As Vasily Panov comments on Gogol's work: "What did God have to create women for in this world? The only possible reason is in order to have the women give birth to Cossacks" (Karlinsky 209).[30] Regarding foreign women, there is a clear Orientalist distinction; the western, Polish girl is a noblewoman, while the Tatar woman is a servant. The Cossack woman occupies the space in-between, not an object of worship and not a servant: her role is simply to produce and care for more Cossack warriors.

[30] Quoted from Vasily Panov's letter about Gogol's "The Shaved-Off Mustache" (never finished).

While the actual mothers are treated disrespectfully (when Bulba tells his son, "Don't listen to your mother, my boy! She's a woman, she knows nothing!"), the idea of a mother is more important (5). Frequently, the Cossacks refer to the "Mother Sech!" showing how their regard for their brotherhood appropriates the role of the mother (47). While Bulba claims that women are not good for anything, they could provide balance to the Cossacks' extremes ways of living. While mothers are greatly respected in theory, in actuality the boys and men treat the women poorly. The mother interacts with men through her eyes only, and clearly just wants to look at her boys: "The mute power of the sadness that trembled in her eyes and on her lips" (8). The mother is reduced to her body parts or function as homemaker.

While the Cossacks avoid women physically, they ascribe female connotations to certain objects such as the Cossack pipe and sword. The Cossack pipe is a substitute for the female; although it may be seen as a phallic symbol (à la Freud's cigar), it also retains something of the feminine in the bowl shape at the end. Ironically, Bulba is caught by the Poles when he drops his pipe, cannot find it in the grass, and then is unable to fight off the thirty assailants in his old age. The sword is unequivocally a masculine and phallic object, however, the sword also takes on the role of mother: "You see this saber? This saber is your mother!" (5). Gogol takes the metaphor of the sword as wife further when Bulba describes the battlefield as a wedding bed: "An honorable Cossack death, all in the same bed, like brides and bridegrooms, in the great bed of the battlefield!" (137).[31] The feminine role of the sword and pipe betrays Gogol's uneasiness with women and his

[31] "Кто из вас хочет умирать… честной, козацкой смертью – всем на одной постеле, как жених с невестою" (PSS 220).

awkward treatment of them in his stories. In "The Terrible Vengeance" from the Dikanka tales, the Cossack Danilo says: "If one has dealings with you, one will turn into a woman oneself…. A Cossack, thank God, fears neither devil nor Catholic priest. What should we come to if we listened to women? No good, should we, boys? The best wife for us is a pipe and a sharp sword" (Gogol, "Complete Tales" 139). In order to create some semblance of balance on the Sech with the absence of women, the qualities of wife and mother are attached to the pipe, the sword, and to the Sech itself.

THE POWER OF EYES

Fanger talks about how Gogol uses eyes for what he calls Recognition: "the association of vision with fear…that law of the Gogolian universe which identifies vision with power. Whether it be positive and vital, or negative and destructive (the evil eye), it is the animating principle" (253). He continues by asserting that the purpose of the gaze is to "unite" the character, author, and reader-spectator and bring awareness about the different roles that they play since "to be authentically seen is to be known" (254-5). Also, Leon Stilman discusses two types of seeing in Gogol's works: "the magic, lethal power of glance, or the fear of being seen… [and the] vision which encompasses very large, "boundless" spaces and resembles the vision of an all-seeing divinity" (376). An example of the first type is in *Viy*, where the Viy kills Khoma when Khoma looks at him and acknowledges him. This type is also in *Taras Bulba* in the glance of the Polish girl and the seductive power of women. The tropes of eyes and seeing also come up with Mother and how she looks at her boys.

Gogol's dual identity appears through lexical markers in the text, in his use of the words *ochi* and *glaza* for eyes. *Glaza* is the overtly Russian term while *ochi* is the older Slavic and Ukrainian term. The number of instances of the search term *glaz-* was forty-four in the 1835 edition and increased to fifty-two in the 1842 edition. The increase of *glaz-* is reasonable, as the second edition increased by fifteen thousand words, but the jump in the use of the word *ochi* is quite drastic. From just four counts in the first edition, the number of the appearances of the word *ochi* jumps to thirty-five in the second. In both editions, the appearance of *glaz-* is associated with the general process of seeing, idiomatic phrasal constructions (for example, before his eyes, *pered glazami*), and also with the lifting (*podnyat'*) and lowering (*potupit'*) of eyes.

The following are the four instances of the use of the word *ochi* in the 1835 edition: the mother looking at her sons, sobbing; the dazzling, *oslepitelnye,* eyes of the Polish girl as Andriy looks up at her in the window; the Polish girl's powerful eyes, *moguchie ochi*; Bulba looking at Andriy before killing him. In this edition, the use of *ochi* is on clearly marked and significant occasions. The mesmerizing power of eyes is linked twice with the Polish girl. While the Polish girl gains power over Andriy by looking at him, the mother seems to be supporting and creating strength through her direct gaze. Finally, since Andriy was seduced by the West through the Polish girl's eyes, his own eyes become *ochi* in the confrontation with his father.

In the 1842 edition, the use of *ochi* expands. In addition to the mother's gaze and the dazzling eyes of the Polish girl, *ochi* are associated with other women in the story. Three times *ochi* are used to mark the Tatar servant woman: when she wakes up Andriy by staring at him, when Bulba sleepily calls out as they walk by, and once describing her

narrow eyes, *uzkie*. Also, during the siege of Dubno, the Polish women pour bags of sand in the eyes of the Cossacks. Later, Gogol refers to presumed widows who look at the eyes of newcomers in the markets with the hope of seeing their loved ones.

Interestingly, *ochi* appear in strange metaphors describing birds (including doves, hawks, eagles, and ravens) pecking out the eyes from the head. In this scene, "the men who felt strong enough set out to collect the dead bodies of their comrades in order to bury them with honors…. They laid out the Cossack bodies and covered them with fresh earth so that rapacious ravens and eagles would not peck out their eyes" (87). [32] Another scene describes a fog that not only clouds the vision but also one's sense of the future. In this fog, "birds fly high and low, fluttering their wings and not recognizing one another [*ne raspoznavaya v ochi drug druga*], the dove not seeing the hawk, the hawk not seeing the dove, neither knowing how near or far it might be from its destruction" (53-4). [33] Gogol marks these birds as metaphors of the Cossacks not being able to distinguish themselves from other nations and the tenuous grasp on life in such a brutal world. Additionally, the Cossacks are compared to eagles:

> Though the wine had given all their eyes [*ochi*] a cheerful sparkle, the men were still dejected. They…. brooded like eagles perched on jagged mountain peaks, peering into the distance over a boundless sea…. The Cossacks *peered* like eagles across the field at their destiny shimmering darkly in the distance, the whole terrain with its hillocks and paths strewn

[32] PSS 196 "Другие же, которые были посвежее, стали прибирать тела и отдавать им последнюю почесть. Палашами и копьями копали могилы; шапками, полами выносили землю; сложили честно козацкие тела и засыпали их свежею землею, чтобы не досталось воронам и хищным орлам выплевывать им очи."

[33] "Безумно летают в нем вверх и вниз, черкая крыльями, птицы, не распознавая в очи друг друга, голубка - не видя ястреба, ястреб - не видя голубки, и никто не знает, как далеко летает он от своей погибели" (PSS 178).

> with their white bones jutting up from the grass, heaped with shattered carts and broken sabers and spears, and drenched with their Cossack blood. Cossack heads with bloody tangled forelocks and mustaches were scattered wide over the field, eagles hacking and ripping out Cossack eyes [*ochi*]. (97-8, emphasis mine)[34]

The above comparison of the Cossacks to eagles is interesting because, at the bottom of the passage, the eagles are pecking out the eyes of the dead Cossacks. This image suggests that the Cossacks' future is built on the deaths of their comrades. While the ideal of a communal brotherhood is appealing on the surface, in practice, the warring lifestyle is not sustainable. While Gogol seems to be aligning the Cossacks with the eagle, reminiscent of the double-headed eagle of Russian Orthodoxy, he also includes the image of the eagle as carrion, preying on the eyes of the dead Cossacks. The use of *ochi* in connection with the eagles suggests a stronger Ukrainian identification, with the eagles symbolizing free-spiritedness and the power to soar freely over the steppes.

Gogol uses *ochi* to mark moments of passionate emotion and actions of creating identity. The increase of instances of the Ukrainian *ochi* balances the increased use of the adjective "russian," *rusk-*, maintaining the confused conflation and separation of Ukrainian and Russian identities in the story. The appearance of *ochi* with birds, particularly eagles, shows the free will of the Cossacks combined with the uncertainty and anxiety about the success of the Cossack brotherhood.

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[34] "Хоть весело глядели очи их всех, просиявшие вином, но сильно загадались они.… Они - как орлы, севшие на вершинах обрывистых, высоких гор, с которых далеко видно расстилающееся беспредельно море…. Как орлы, озирали они вокруг себя очами все поле и чернеющую вдали судьбу свою. Будет, будет все поле с облогами и дорогами покрыто торчащими их белыми костями, щедро обмывшись козацкою их кровью и покрывшись разбитыми возами, расколотыми саблями и копьями. Далече раскинутся чубатые головы с перекрученными и запекшимися в крови чубами и запущенными книзу усами. Будут, налетев, орлы выдирать и выдергивать из них козацкие очи" (PSS 201)

RUSSIAN NATIONALISM AND GLORY

The trope of Russian nationalism appeals to two types of audiences: for the Russian, *Taras Bulba* serves as a wonderful example of the successful russification of the imperial power through appropriation of the "others'" cultural narrative; for a Ukrainian or revolutionary, Gogol's text provides an excellent satire of the Russian "social organism" (Bojanowska 368). The Cossacks' dying words exemplify Gogol's capacity for hyperbole which masks his own opinions by supporting two opposing interpretations.

The instances of Russian nationalism in the 1842 edition base their power on vocal exclamations. While the other Cossacks make loud proclamations as they die, Andriy dies whispering the name of the Polish girl. While it slips by without notice in the first edition, the distinction becomes clearer in the second edition when all the other Cossacks proudly proclaim what they are dying for. Andriy dies for the un-named Polish girl and for the Western values that she represents.

The Cossacks are only able to die a "good death" by reifying one last time what they are dying for (107). One Cossack attains glory through his deeds in battle: "I cut down seven men, impaled nine with my lance, trampled many Poles with my horse, and I don't know how many I hit with my bullets" (107).[35] They all refer to "Russian lands," not the Russian people or ruler (106). [36] Near the end of the story, Taras proclaims that "a Russian Czar will spring forth from the Russian earth" indicating that the worth of the

[35] "Сдается мне, паны-братья, умираю хорошею смертью: семерых изрубил, девятерых копьем исколол. Истоптал конем вдоволь, а уж не припомню, скольких достал пулею. Пусть же цветет вечно Русская земля!" (PSS 206).
[36] "Пусть же продадут все враги и ликует вечные веки Русская земля" (PSS 205).

Russian people is based on the land (141). Additionally, each Cossack pronounces the eternal triumph Russia and the Orthodox Church.

Bulba's speech on nationalism and brotherhood: Bulba's passionate speech is immediately contrasted with a scene of the Polish army, comprised of nobles with their servants. The relationship between the Polish soldiers lacks the warmth of the Cossack brotherhood; the nobles even have to pay their servants to be there, suggesting a lack of loyalty and the desire for monetary gain.

TARAS BULBA IN MODERN RUSSIA

In 2009, two hundred years after Gogol's birth, both Ukraine and Russia produced film representations of *Taras Bulba*. Both films diverge from the original text with the aim of emphasizing either Ukrainian or Russian values. The films demonstrate the modern understanding of Gogol's story and the importance it holds in both Ukrainian and Russian cultural identity. Bortko's film exaggerates the hyperbolic language associated with Russian nationalism and the love story and portrays the unity of Russian and Ukrainian history and identity. For example, all of the Cossacks speak Russian, but the Poles speak Polish; only Ukrainian is spoken in the other film. Bereznyak's film portrays the traditional values of the Ukrainian Cossacks and creates intimate relationships between Bulba and his sons.

Bereznyak's film roots *Taras Bulba* firmly in the Ukrainian landscape, opening the film with scenes of the steppe, flowers, and a river with traditional music playing in the background. The next shot is of a bandura player and then a Polovtsian statue. The

film shows a traditional Ukrainian household: women doing laundry, the Cossacks working at blacksmithing and showing off their skill with weapons and on horseback. The scenes are very lighthearted and good-natured, and produce a homey feeling. Bortko's film, on the other hand, russifies the Cossacks, making them more accessible to a Russian audience. The film opens with the scene from the 1842 edition, where Bulba gives a speech to all the Cossacks before the fight at Dubno. He talks about the Russian soul and the glory of fighting for the Russian land and claims that "there has never been a brotherhood such as we have here in Russia!.... To love as the Russian soul can love…, nobody else can love like that!" (100-1).

Gogol's theme of the fear of women is neutralized in Bortko's film, since the Polish girl becomes pregnant from her encounter with Andriy and bears him a child. This deviation from the text has the effect of normalizing Gogol's story and admitting that they, in fact, consummated their "love," which Gogol himself seems to have had difficulty writing about.[37] Along with the lovechild, the tagline on the poster, *ot lyubvi do nenavisti* (from love to hatred), entices viewers to watch a dramatic love story. In fact, the relationship between Andriy and the Polish girl is not at all one of love; they exoticize each other and come together out of attraction to the "other." The scenes with the two lovers only take up a handful of minutes while the bulk of the film focuses on the battle scenes.

Ostap's character is minimal in both films; even in the texts, his character is not very developed. Ostap is a fierce warrior and a cunning leader, but not much else, living

[37] Karlinsky describes the awkwardness of the encounter, since the text describes her lips on his cheek and his lips on hers, a physical impossibility.

out the ideal Cossack life described by Bulba. The only interesting moment in Ostap's narrative, in this author's opinion, is in the beginning, when he picks a fight with his father. Although Ostap appears to have a contrary and disobedient nature from the start, he soon fades into the background, becoming an idea warrior without faults or weaknesses. Bereznyak's film cuts out the part of the story when Ostap is captured and executed by the Poles.

The confrontation scene between Andriy and Bulba differs drastically between the two films. In Bortko's film, faithful to the text, Bulba pulls up his rifle and fires at Andriy. The camera shot moves back and forth from Bulba to Andriy, getting closer each time. In the final two shots, we see Bulba aiming straight at the audience, forcing the viewer to look up the barrel of the gun and into Bulba's eye. The next shot is a close-up of Andriy's eyes. The cinematography and directing emphasize, to the viewer, how barbaric Bulba and the Cossacks are. Crucially, this scene focuses on the eyes of both father and son, with one of Bulba's eyes replaced by the rifle. In Bereznyak's film, the scene between father and son is intimate, with Bulba actually holding the reins of Andriy's horse. When Andriy dismounts, Bulba embraces him; although the weapon is never seen, Bulba makes the motion of killing his son with a knife. The lack of a visual of the weapon is crucial for establishing Bulba as a compassionate father in addition to a fierce Cossack warrior.

Conclusions

We need more works like "Taras Bulba," to better understand the emotional wellsprings of the threat we face today in places like the Middle East and Central Asia.
-Robert Kaplan[38]

Gogol's story *Taras Bulba* examines what it is to be barbaric or civilized and addresses the liminal identities that occupy the borderlands. The text address issues with the idealized brotherhood and the influence of Russian nationalism. The role of women in the Cossack's life is minimal, requiring them to find female substitutes in objects. The lexical marker of Ukrainian identity, *ochi*, balances the increase of Russian nationalistic phrases while also playing a role in emotionally charged or significant events. As Kornblatt posits, "the seamless combination of opposing traits is a hallmark of the Cossack myth" (46). Gogol's Cossacks, through both redactions of the text and the films, demonstrate how Ukrainian and Russian identities can be blended and balanced together.

The nineteenth century Cossack myth is one of the defining features of Ukrainian identity, diverging from the Russian cultural myth of the Cossacks. For Ukrainians, the Cossacks represent freedom, independence, and traditional cultural values. For Russians, the Cossacks are exoticized warriors, defenders of the faith, and sometimes common bandits. These differing myths manifest in the twentieth century film versions of *Taras Bulba*, showing how cultural ideologies and attitudes have further evolved.

[38] Robert D. Kaplan, an analyst for Stratfor and author on foreign affairs and travel, writes that Gogol thought of identities as overlapping: "His [Gogol's] account mirrors the conflicts, the confusions, and the nuances of our own era. It remains unclear, for instance, whether Ukraine will survive as an independent country or at some point will dissipate within the pressure cooker of a resurgent Russian Empire" (*Taras Bulba* xiii).

As Bojanowska points out, given the nationalist discourse and political atmosphere in Russia, scholars are revisiting Gogol's important text in order to gain further insight into the origins of the identity conflict through his "presentation of the Russian-Ukrainian cultural interface as a zone of extraordinary tension" (3). In 2007, Bojanowska refers to the Orange Revolution, but the conflict has clearly evolved to new dimensions. Eight years later, this topic has only gained in importance when we think about the EuroMaidan revolution, the annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing conflict in the Donbass. Russia continues to exercise imperial power as evidenced by its annexation Crimea, which Empress Catherine II (The Great) considered "the best pearl in the crown of Russia," although the native inhabitants of Crimea were not historically Russian (qtd. in Lazzerini 172). From her comment, it is clear that Crimea is objectified, exoticized, and something that can be acquired.

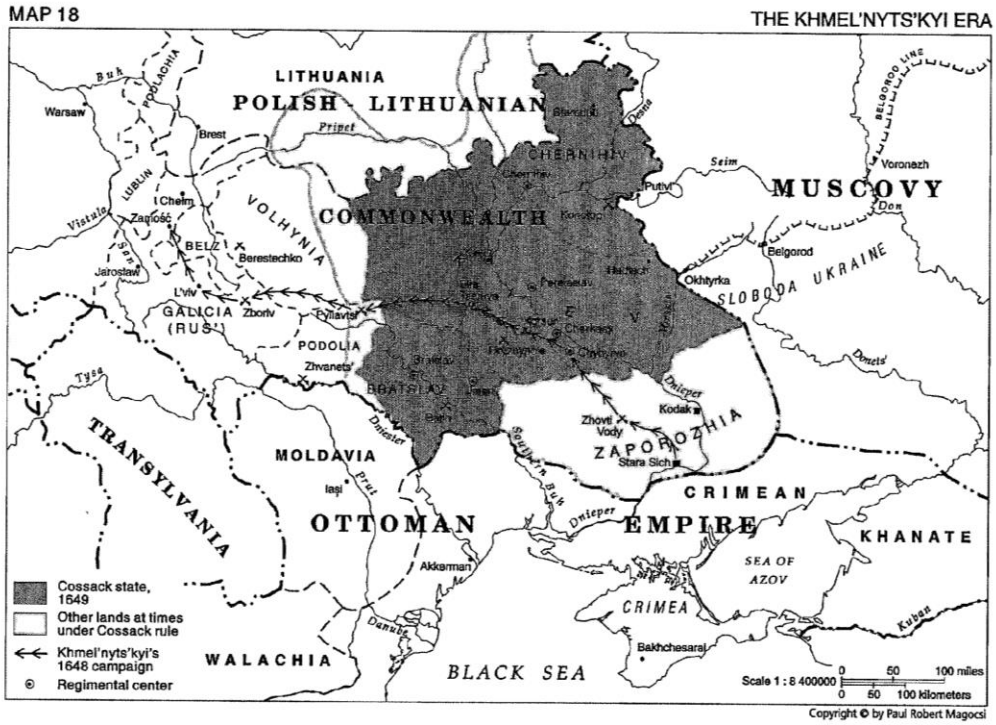
When I started this project, my focus was on the animosity between Russia and Ukraine with the hope of finding common ground and building mutual understanding. While Orientalist thought traditionally operates on emphasizing differences and creating distance between nations, my work has shown the possibility of reconciling cultural "otherness." Gogol was a master at successfully navigating the line between genre, language, nationality, and cultural identity. The Ukrainian Cossacks experienced imperial force and subjugation from both Poland and Russia but in *Taras Bulba*, Gogol resolves the cultural the tension, reconciling the exotic "others."

Appendix

MAP 1 – KIEVAN RUS', CIRCA 1240

(Magocsi 40)

MAP 2 – THE KHMELNITSKY ERA



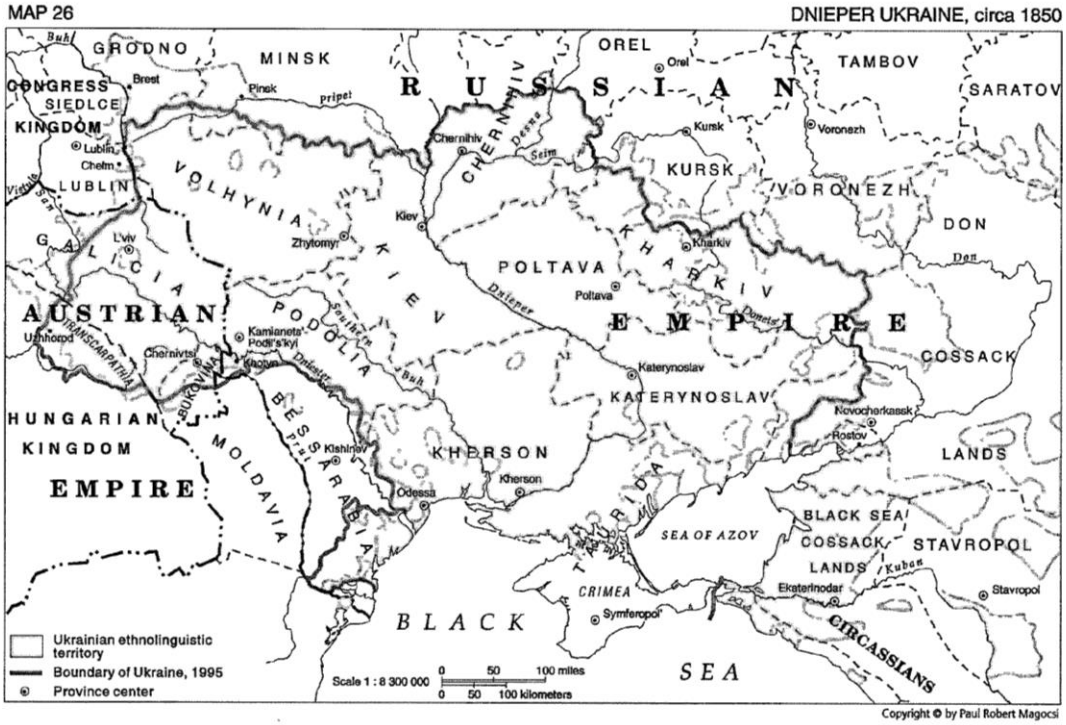
(Magocsi 94)

MAP 3 – COSSACK TERRITORIES IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Cossack Territories in the Seventeenth Century

(Kornblatt 7)

MAP 4 – DNIEPER UKRAINE, CIRCA 1850



(Magocsi 136)

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